

**An Introduction to the
WELCOME CARD**

A Data Gathering and Communications Resource for the Local Church

Introduction

This version of the Welcome Card was developed at MCC Austin at Freedom Oaks, Austin, TX. It allows the local church to do the following things on a weekly basis:

- Record Attendance
- Gather Contact Information On All Attendees
- Edit Contact Information On All Attendees
- Identify First Time Visitors
- Gather Contact Information On First Time Visitors
- Build And Edit A Distribution List For E-Newsletters And Other E-Communications
- Enlist Volunteers For Specific Events And Projects
- Enlist Candidates For Leadership Positions
- Anticipate Attendance At Upcoming Events
- Receive Specific Prayer Requests
- Gather Names Of Persons Who Are Being Missed In Worship
- Receive Any Message Worship Attendees Might Want To Communicate
- And Much, Much More!

The uses of the card described below were developed in a large church and assume the availability of staff and/or volunteers. However, it is easily adapted to any size church by simply deciding what information you want to receive and how you will respond to it. Never invite information unless you plan to use or respond to it.

Following is a Way the Welcome Card Might be Introduced in Worship on a Weekly Basis.

At the beginning of the service, the person doing the general welcome might include the following (which takes less than two minutes):

“As you arrived today, you received a Welcome Card that looks like this (holds up card). We hope you will take a moment to fill it out and place it in the collection plate as it passes later in the service*. If you are visiting for the first time, please indicate that on the front of the card. If any of your contact information has changed since the last time you provided it, please take this opportunity to update it for us, and if we do not have your email address yet, there is a place for you to provide that also. [Optional: If you provide your email address, we will begin sending you our weekly electronic newsletter.]

At the bottom of the card you will see several numbers and letters. Today you may circle the number 1 if you plan to attend next week’s membership class and the number 2 if you plan to attend the forum next Saturday. Please circle the number 3 if you would like to receive more information about any of the upcoming MCC conferences. Please circle the letter A if you would like to volunteer to become a greeter or usher. The Care Card Code Box** on page 5 of your newsletter will remind you of which letters and numbers may be circled today. On the back of the card you may write a prayer request or any message you might like. There is also a place for you to provide the name of anyone you have been missing lately in worship.”

*As a reminder, the person introducing the offering might conclude by saying, “And as a sign of the gift of your presence with us today, please place your Welcome Card in the offering plate as it passes.”

**The Care Card Code Box is not essential but it helps remind people of which numbers and letters to circle for which purposes. It can be located anywhere in your printed bulletin or projected. On the day the above verbal announcement was made it would look like this in the printed version:

YOUR CARE CARD CODES FOR TODAY

Today you may circle the following numbers and letters:

1. if you are interested in attending next week’s membership class
2. if you plan to attend Saturday’s forum
3. if you would like more information on upcoming MCC conferences
- A. if you would like to volunteer to be an usher or greeter

**As You Can See, There are Numerous Ways to Use this Information.
Here is what MCC Austin did.**

1. **Sunday**. Those responsible for handling the offerings gathered the Welcome Cards from all services that week and put them in a designated place. Sunday afternoon, one or more members of the *Shepherding Ministry* took the cards and entered all written prayer requests on the computer. They then:
 - a. emailed those requests to the deacons who were committed to begin praying in response to the requests
 - b. hand wrote individual responses to each person assuring them that their request had been received and that prayers were being offered. As this ministry grew (and yours will, also) we printed cards with a supportive message on it so that the person could write maybe only one sentence and then sign. Regular attendees will often check the box stating that no written response is necessary.

(Note: this requires the *Shepherding Ministry* to have access to a computer with the church's contact information data. People who know you have their information will write prayer requests on a card when the only other thing on the card may be their name. The office insured that they had plenty of cards. On Monday morning, an office worker or volunteer would stamp and mail the cards. These Sunday afternoon activities were the only thing the *Shepherding Ministry* did.)

2. **Monday**. One or more staff persons or volunteers did the following:
 - a. stamped and mailed the cards written on Sunday
 - b. used the Welcome Cards to enter attendance and to update contact information
 - c. sent new email addresses to the person keeping the distribution list for e-communications
 - d. compiled the names of those circling numbers and/or letter and forwarded them to the person in charge of that item
 - e. composed a list of all messages on the computer and printed copies of those and copies of the prayer requests (from Sunday) and placed them in the interoffice boxes of all staff members
 - f. compiled a list of all persons who have been missed in worship and forwarded that list to deacons
 - g. prepared letters to all first time visitors
3. **Tuesday**. This was the day of our weekly staff meeting, at which we:
 - a. reviewed and prayed in response to prayer requests
 - b. reviewed all messages, decided which required responses and who would respond
 - c. senior pastor signed visitor's letters
 - d. staff was alerted to any other "red flags" or "issues" that the cards might have revealed, like changes of address indicating possible changes in relationships, etc.

Summary

I always referred to this little card as the "work horse" of our church. It insured constant communication between congregants and staff and offered opportunities for congregational care in a more timely and consistent way than I have ever been able to identify through any other means.